

Testimony of  
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Committee on Government Reform  
Congressman Tom Davis, Chair  
Representative Henry Waxman, Ranking Minority Member

Regional Security: DHS Grants to the National Capital Area  
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Room 2154  
Rayburn House Office Building  
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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member and members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the local impacts associated with reduction in homeland security funding. This is an issue of great importance to the governments of the National Capital Region (NCR), and we are grateful to the Committee for taking a closer look at homeland security funding decisions.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is a regional organization comprised of representatives of 20 local governments surrounding the nation's capital, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives. Policies and plans are set by COG's full membership acting through the Board of Directors and its supporting bodies, as well as the National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC).

A major component of the COG vision is keeping the region safe and secure. Since the events of 9/11, the EPC has worked diligently to enhance our capabilities in emergency preparedness and planning. The residents of this region are now in a position of greater security, and we remain dedicated to effective, efficient and timely emergency planning to help keep them safe.

We are here today to assure members of Congress that:

- Local governments in the National Capital Region will respond quickly and effectively to emergencies in this area, using our own resources and in close coordination with state and federal officials.
- This region's leaders have invested homeland security funds wisely. We have purchased back-up sets of personal protective gear for first responders, we have adopted systems that allow those first responders to communicate with each other and regional leaders, we are working to secure and protect our water supply and we have emergency transportation plans.
- The Department of Homeland Security identified 37 capabilities that need to be addressed nationally, and DHS asked that the National Capital Region focus on eight of those priorities. Through our own rigorous planning process, officials decided to go above the call of duty by adding six additional target areas, making for a combined list of 14 capabilities.
- The impact of the cut in our UASI funds will be serious. Simply stated, we cannot achieve the security improvements this Congress values with the proposed funding level.
- Some have mentioned that the National Capital Region's application was somehow insufficient. Although we believe we followed the instructions we received, let us assure you that we will study all the feedback from DHS and that we are determined to strengthen the application. We are just as committed as we were after 9-11, when we were the first region in the country to respond with a detailed planning process.

## Regional Security Risks

I would like to assure you that **there is no increased security risk to the region**. A major component of the COG vision is a firm commitment to keeping the region safe and secure. Since the events of 9/11, the EPC has worked diligently to enhance our capabilities in emergency preparedness and planning. Because of these efforts, the residents of this region are now in a position of greater security.

We remain dedicated to effective, efficient, and timely emergency planning which can help keep residents safe, and we know that local governments in the National Capital Region will respond quickly and effectively if there is an emergency in the area. We have worked diligently over the past several years to ensure that adequate plans are in place. These homeland security plans, used in collaboration with state and federal officials, are more than adequate to handle a potential crisis situation.

## Investment of Homeland Security Funds

The Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) grant program of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provides financial assistance to address the unique planning, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high risk urban areas, and to assist them in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, respond to, and recover from threats or acts of terrorism.

Regional leaders have **worked collaboratively to wisely invest homeland security funds**. Our primary focus, once again, has been to put in place effective programs and policies that will keep the region safe for years to come. We have purchased back-up sets of personal protective gear for first responders and adopted systems that allow those first responders to communicate with each other quickly and directly. We have developed emergency transportation plans, and are working to secure and protect our water supply.

The table below shows how UASI funds have been allocated to the NCR since fiscal year 2003. As you can see, the proportion of funds deemed by DHS as necessary for NCR preparedness efforts is significantly lower than what was granted to the region in fiscal year 2005. As such, the proposed funding level is much lower than what NCR officials had deemed would be necessary to efficiently build upon the solid groundwork that has been laid for the safety of the region.

Fiscal Year	NCR Allocation	Percentage of Total
FY 2003	\$60.5M	10.3%
FY 2004	\$29.1M	4.3%
FY 2005	\$77.5M	9.1%
FY 2006	\$46.5M	6.3%
Total	\$213.8M	7.9%

### **Impacts of FY06 Funding**

The table below, which outlines the funding requests that were included in our application to DHS, shows that **the region still faces a tremendous amount of unmet needs**. The officials who set these priorities are among the most the experienced in the country, and it is their belief that the region **stands to be impacted by the decreased level of funds**. In addition to training and equipment for our first responders, the NCR had hoped to dedicate a large portion of funds to new technology that would connect these first responders in the event of a terrorist attacks or other emergency. While reduced funding will not make the region less safe or secure, it will limit how quickly we are able to build upon the solid foundation we now have for connecting our law enforcement officials, community leaders and other stakeholders.

Investment Area	Allocation
CBRNE Detection	\$5.25M
Critical Infrastructure Protection	\$26.25M
Citizen Preparedness and Participation	\$10.00M
Citizen Protection	\$11.00M
Critical Resource Logistics and Distribution	\$21.00M
Explosive Device Response	\$9.45M
Intelligence/Information Sharing/Dissemination	\$10.05M
Interoperable Communications	\$42.00M
Law Enforcement Investigation & Operations	\$11.55M
Mass Care	\$5.00M
Mass Prophylaxis	\$3.67M
Medical Surge	\$6.30M
Planning	\$15.22M
WMD/Hazardous Materials Response & Decon	\$11.50M
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$188.24M</b>

## Application Evaluation

We generally support the risk-based approach taken by DHS, but believe the Department's risk and effectiveness-based methodology used in determining fiscal year 2006 grants to be flawed. In assessing applications, DHS first looked at the level of risk in particular areas -- which accounted for two-thirds of each final evaluation. For the remaining one-third of the evaluation, the Department then considered the effectiveness of applications in terms of their relevance, innovation and feasibility.

Using this formula to allocate funds to the NCR, the department determined that each individual element of the application -- both risk and effectiveness elements -- was either at or above average. Yet, somehow, the Department's compounding of these above-average elements resulted in a final determination that the effectiveness of the overall NCR application was "in the bottom 25 percent of all Urban Area submissions," even though the region's risk was found to be in the top 97<sup>th</sup> percentile of all eligible areas. The computation of these elements, as well as some of the short shrift of the review, is a process the officials of the NCR cannot understand.

The region's homeland security plan is complex and constantly evolving, and we are committed to studying all feedback from the Department of Homeland Security to make the plan as effective as possible. Although we believe we followed the instructions we received, **we are determined to strengthen the application.**

## Distributing Funds

In closing, I would like to reemphasize that the capabilities we've built over the last four years will not go away. The region will not be less safe or secure as a result of lower funding levels, and the EPC will remain as committed as ever to keeping the region safe. Even though, with this level of funding, we will have less ability to accomplish as much as we expected to further enhance the region's preparedness, we will proceed as effectively and strategically as possible.

With this in mind, the Senior Policy Group (SPG) and Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) will prioritize needs to develop a list of the projects that can be funded by the current award level of \$46.4 million. Although it will be a challenge to determine how to best distribute funding, stakeholders will do everything in their power to ensure the money is spent as effectively and strategically as possible. While it is our belief that the highly the experienced practitioners who worked on the application did follow guidelines provided by DHS, we will examine all feedback and work to strengthen the document.